

L O U N G E R.

[N^o XL.]

Saturday, Nov. 5. 1785.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

S I R,

IN the works of your predecessors, as well as in every other book of didactic wisdom, much stress is laid on the advantages of a cultivated education, of an early acquaintance with the celebrated authors of antiquity. From *Cicero* downwards, (and indeed much more anciently than *Cicero*), the benefits of learning have been enumerated, which is held forth as the surest road to respect, to advancement, and to happiness.

There was a time, Mr Lounger, when this was my own opinion; and, seconded by the wishes of my parents, I early applied myself to every branch of learning which their circumstances, rather narrow ones, could set within my reach. As I was intended for the church, I received an academical education suited to that profession; and acquired besides a considerable knowledge, as was generally allowed, in different departments of science not absolutely requisite to the situation of a clergyman. For the acquisition of these I was indebted to the generous assistance of a gentleman whose godson I happened to be. He used to say, that a clergyman in this country should know something more than divinity; that he must be the physician, the geographer, and the naturalist of his parish: and accordingly, to the scanty allowance of my father, he made an addition equal to the procuring me an opportunity of acquiring the different branches of knowledge connected with these studies.

By the favour of the same gentleman, I lately procured a recommendation to a friend of his, a Baronet in my native county, who has in his gift the presentation to a considerable living, of which the present incumbent is in such a valetudinary state, as makes his surviving long a matter of very little probability. To this recommendation a very favourable answer was received, expressive of the great regard which the Baronet and his family bore to the gentleman who patronised me, and accompanied with what we thought a very fortunate piece of condescension and politeness, an invitation for me to spend a week or two at the Baronet's country-seat during the autumn vacation. Of this I need not say how happy we were to accept. My family rejoiced at the introduction

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which I was about to procure to the notice and complacency of a great man's house, and considered it as the return which they had always hoped for all their trouble and expence about my education. My own pride was not silent on the subject. I looked on this visit as an opportunity afforded me of displaying the talents with which I flattered myself I was endowed, and the knowledge I had been at such pains to attain.

When I arrived at the Baronet's, I found him and his Lady a good deal disappointed with my appearance and address, which I now first perceived to want something which was essential to good company. I felt an awkwardness which my want of mixing with the world had occasioned, and an embarrassment which all my knowledge did not enable me to overcome. For these, however, Sir John and Lady F— felt rather compassion than displeasure, and delivered me over to the valet de chambre, to make me somewhat smarter, as they called it, by having my hair more modishly dressed, and the cut of my coat altered; an improvement which I rather felt as an indignity, than acknowledged as a favour. These preliminaries being adjusted, I was suffered to come into company, where I expected to make up for the deficiency of my exterior, by displaying the powers of my mind, and the extent of my knowledge. But I discovered to my infinite mortification, that my former studies had been altogether misapplied, and that in my present situation they availed me nothing. My knowledge of the learned languages, of classical authors, of the history, the philosophy and the poetry of the ancients, I met with no occasion to introduce, and no hearers to understand; but it was found that I could neither carve, play whist, sing a catch, or make up one in a country dance. A young lady, a visitor of the family, who was said to be a great reader, tried me with the enigmas of the Lady's Magazine, and declared me impracticably dull. Geography, astronomy, or natural history, Sir John and his companions neither understood nor cared for; but some of them reminded the Baronet, in my presence, of a clergyman they had met with in one of their excursions, a man of the most complete education, who was allowed to be the best Bowler in the county, a dead shot, rode like the devil, (these were the gentleman's words), and was a sure hand at finding a hare.

If these qualities are not very clerical, they may however be deemed innocent; but I find from the discourse of the family, that some other things are required of Sir John's parson, which it would not be so easy for a good conscience to comply with. He must now and then drink a couple of bottles, when the company chuses to be frolicksome; he must wink at certain indecencies in language, and irregularities in behaviour; and once, when Sir John had sat rather
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longer than usual after dinner, he told me, that a clergyman to be an honest fellow must have nothing of religion about him.

In the seclusion of a college I may perhaps have over-rated the usefulness of science, and the value of intellectual endowments; my pride of scholarship, therefore, I should be willing to overcome, since I find that learning confers so little estimation in the world: but as on the score of qualifications I am incapable of what is desired, and in the article of indulgencies will never submit to what is expected; is it not my duty, Mr Lounger, to resign my pretensions to the living which was promised me? Though I dread the reproaches of my parents, whom the prospect of having me so soon provided for had made happy; though I fear to offend my benefactor who recommended me to Sir John, and at the same time assured me that he was one of the best sort of men he knew; yet surely to purchase patronage and favour by such arts is unworthy, to insure them by such compliances is criminal. I am, &c.

MODESTUS.

In the course of my late excursion to the country, I have seen some instances of the evil complained of by my correspondent, which equally surprised and grieved me. The proprietor of a country parish, if he has the true pride and feeling of his station, will consider himself as a kind of sovereign of the domain; bound, like all other sovereigns, as much for his own sake as for theirs, to promote the interests and the happiness of his people. So much of both depend on the choice of their pastor, that perhaps there is no appointment which he has the power of making, more material to the prosperity and good order of his estate. The advantages of rational religion, or the evils which arise from its abuse, which are often the effects of a proper or improper nomination of a clergyman, form a character of the people of a district not more important to their morals and eternal interests, than to their temporal welfare and prosperity.

I was very much pleased, in my late visit at *Colonel Caustic's*, with the appearance and deportment of the clergyman of his parish, who was a frequent visitor of my friend's and his sister's. The Colonel, after drawing his character in a very favourable way, concluded with telling me, that he had seen something of the world, having officiated in the early part of his life as the chaplain of a regiment. To this circumstance, I confess, I was inclined to impute some of the Colonel's predilection in his favour; but a little acquaintance with him convinced me, that he had done the good man no more than justice in his eulogium. There was something of a placid dignity in his aspect; of a politeness, not of form, but of senti-
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ment, in his manner; of a mildness, undebaſed by flattery, in his converſation, equally pleaſing and reſpectable. He had now no family, as Miſs Cauſtic informed me, having had the miſfortune to loſe his wife, and two children ſhe had brought him, a good many years ago. But his pariſhioners are his family, ſaid ſhe. His look indeed was parental, with ſomething above the cares, but not the charities of this world; and over a caſt of ſeriousneſs, and perhaps melancholy, that ſeemed to be reſerved for himſelf, there was an eaſy chearfulneſs, and now and then a gaiety, that ſpoke to the innocent pleaſures of life a language of kindneſs and indulgence.

“ ’Tis the religion of a gentleman,” ſaid Colonel Cauſtic.—
 “ ’Tis the religion of a philoſopher,” ſaid I.—“ ’Tis ſomething
 “ more uſeful than either,” ſaid his ſiſter. “ Did you know his
 “ labours as I have ſometimes occaſion to do! The compoſer of
 “ differences; the promoter of peace and of contentment; the en-
 “ courager of induſtry, ſobriety, and all the virtues that make the
 “ lower ranks proſperous and happy. He gives to religion a cer-
 “ tain graciousneſs which allures to its ſervice, yet in his own con-
 “ duct he takes leſs indulgence than many that preach its terrors.
 “ The duties of his function are his pleaſures, and his doctrine is,
 “ that every man will experience the ſame thing, if he brings his
 “ mind fairly to the trial: that to fill our ſtation well is in every
 “ ſtation to be happy.”

“ The great and the wealthy, I have heard the good man ſay,” continued the excellent ſiſter of my friend, “ to whom refinement
 “ and fancy open a thouſand ſources of delight, do not make the
 “ proper allowance for the inferior rank of men. That rank has
 “ ſcarce any exerciſe of mind or imagination but one, and that
 “ one is religion; we are not to wonder if it ſometimes wanders
 “ into the gloom of ſuperſtition, or the wilds of enthuiſaſm.
 “ To keep this principle warm but pure, to teach it as the goſpel
 “ has taught it, ‘the mother of good works,’ as encouraging,
 “ not excuſing our duties, the guide at the ſame time, and the
 “ ſweetner of life: to diſpenſe this ſacred treaſure as the balm of
 “ diſtreſs, the cordial of diſeaſe, the conqueror of death! theſe are
 “ the privileges which I enjoy, which I hope I have uſed for the
 “ good of my people: they have hitherto ſhed ſatisfaction on my
 “ life, and I truſt will ſmooth its cloſe!”

“ ’Tis the religion of a Chriſtian!” ſaid Miſs Cauſtic.

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